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SUBJECT: A FRENCH VIEW OF GHANA

Classified By: Ambassador Pamela E. Bridgewater for reasons 1.5 d and e
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¶1. (SBU) On January 26, Ambassador paid a courtesy call on French Ambassador to Ghana Pierre Jacquemot. Ghana's strengths, according to Jacquemot are its friendly people and its good management of the macroeconomy. The strong role of traditional chiefs plays a generally moderating role in society, especially the new more educated chiefs. Ghana's reputation as a "good pupil" is resulting in huge inflows of remittances and foreign assistance. The ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) has many good potential contenders for the party ticket in the 2008 election (Jacquemot likes Education Minister Yaw Osafo Maafo and Foreign Minister Nana Akufo Addo.)

¶2. (C) Nonetheless, Jacquemot was concerned that as a "good pupil" the GOG was becoming complacent and needs to "take more ownership" of Ghana's development. The second Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) was flawed, lacking long-range statistical forecasts (the trade and tourism ministers were upset about the gaps in the GPRS II.) The GOG does not make a significant contribution to its own budget, and is uncomfortable about discussing the use of the remittances coming into the country, according to Jacquemot. Ghanaian elites are isolated and do not understand the scope of poverty in their country. Jacquemot conceded that corruption is a problem (although it is better than many other countries in Africa) and the Europeans are starting a DCM-level group to focus on this issue. President Kufuor raised the same issues during the recent visit to Ghana of France's Minister of Cooperation as he did in a meeting with President Chirac several months ago (the top GOG requests were French assistance in building a railway to Burkina Faso, in developing cotton in the north, and in strengthening the Ghana air force.) There is a sense of inertia in the GOG, according to Jacquemot. (A recurring theme heard in Ambassador's courtesy calls.)

¶3. (U) French priorities in Ghana are managing its assistance program (with a focus on basic human needs and governance), teaching the French language (reportedly popular with President Kufuor), and promoting French cultural activities. Jacquemot said that President Kufuor has now announced plans for Ghana to join the Francophonie community.

BRIDGEWATER